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Plea to End Loose Talk Welcomed by Kennedy

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A Representative's plea that public officials keep quiet about American intelligence activities was welcome news to President Kennedy, and many members of Congress agreed "silence is golden."

The President, it was learned today, was immensely pleased when aides showed him news wire accounts of a speech by Representative Mahon, Democrat of Texas, in the House yesterday.

There was good reason to believe Mr. Kennedy began making plans to grab the ball Mr. Mahon tossed into the air.

White House sources said, however, that Mr. Mahon spoke on his own initiative, that Mr. Kennedy had no foreknowledge of the blistering attack on loose talk.

Mr. Mahon, chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, said "officials in Moscow, Peking and Havana must applaud our stupidity in announcing publicly facts

which they would gladly spend huge sums of money endeavoring to obtain."

He gave no specific examples and said the executive branch and the legislative, Republicans and Democrats alike, "must share the blame" for "making us the laughing stock of the world."

There was an immediate chorus of "amens" on Capitol Hill.

At the same time, Representative Wilson, Republican of California, said he had called on Secretary of Defense McNamara to tell the American

people whether Soviet ships recently reported en route to Cuba to remove Russian troops actually were carrying missiles to the island.

In a news release from his office, Mr. Wilson said he had sent a letter to the Secretary posing these questions:

"How many ships have actually arrived in Cuban ports ostensibly to return Soviet soldiers? Have our intelligence-gathering services checked the unloading of these vessels to determine whether they carried missiles into Cuba? How many Russians have left Cuba?"

Urges Release

Mr. Wilson's letter continued: "Since the Communists obviously are aware of the answers to these questions, I can see no reason to withhold the same information from the American public."

In expressing agreement with Mr. Mahon, Senate Democratic Leader Mansfield said: "I feel that there's too much intelligence given out." And Senator Jackson, Democrat of Washington, told a reporter: "All should heed the admonition that silence is the golden rule of intelligence."

On the House side, Mr. Mahon's assertion that "the present situation is outrageous and intolerable" brought a bipartisan plea to try to stop the tongue-wagging as far as Congress is concerned.

"I hope that during these confused times members of Congress will be particularly careful about what they say," said Representative Bolton of Ohio, top Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

"We must exercise discretion in these matters," said Representative Jensen of Iowa, senior Republican on the Appropriations Committee. "None of us should be responsible for giving aid and comfort to the Communists by loose talk."

Suggest New Unit

In addition to these affirmations of approval, Assistant Senate Democratic Leader Humphrey suggested in a Senate speech that a new Joint Committee on National Security have legislative jurisdiction over all Government intelligence agencies.

And Republican Rogers, Democrat of Florida, called for adoption of his resolution to establish a Senate-House Committee to co-ordinate the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency and similar groups.

In his speech, Mr. Mahon called on Mr. Kennedy, Vice President Johnson and Speaker McCormack to "co-ordinate a course of action for the purpose of halting the rapid erosion of our national intelligence effort."

Two Reasons

"Today's headlines may cost the lives of the human sources of information," Mr. Mahon said. "The enemy can find our intelligence sources much more easily when he knows what we have found out. This knowledge helps to pinpoint the location of intelligence activities, and once knowing the location, the discovery of the means is much easier and intelligence sources dry up."

Mr. Kennedy had at least two reasons for welcoming Mr. Mahon's speech:

1. Various administration officials have repeatedly expressed the view that, because this is a democracy where government secrets are suspect, there is a tendency to make public too much information that could be helpful to a potential enemy.

2. Any curbing of public discussion of intelligence activities might serve to quiet the continuing controversy about the effectiveness of intelligence operations involving Soviet moves in Cuba.

In addition, the administration might use Mr. Mahon's speech as a new lever to employ in discouraging Government employees from giving certain kinds of information to newsmen.

Mistakes Seen

Mr. Mahon said the Kennedy administration "has mistakenly allowed itself to be goaded into revealing information detrimental to our best interests."

casiness Mr. Kennedy expressed at a news conference February 7, the day after Mr. McNamara and an aide conducted an unprecedented, televised display of reconnaissance photographs of the Cuban arms buildup.